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ABSTRACT

This document is designed for further education (FE) colleges and individuals responsible for regional FE planning in the United Kingdom. Based on several case studies and the views of selected stakeholders in FE, it presents a framework for ensuring adequate and sufficient FE for young people. Discussed in the document's four sections are the following topics: statutory responsibilities and stakeholders' interests (responsibilities for securing adequate/sufficient FE provision, duties of funding councils, role of training and education councils and regional/subregional groupings, Charter for Further Education, other interested parties, information sources); current issues and responses (key issues, planning in competitive environments, importance of local context, local planning forums, local partnerships, independent initiatives by colleges, improved information, strategic positioning, enhanced planning skills/systems, improved guidance, resources); a framework focusing on student entitlements that considers the differences between providing FE for young people and providing it for adults; and next steps (leveling the playing field and recent initiatives). Appended are the following: checklists for adequate and sufficient provision; extract from the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act; and a list of contributors and workshop participants. Contains 20 references. (MN)

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Adequate and sufficient FE for young people

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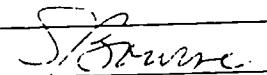
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Adequate and
sufficient FE

for young people

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Executive summary

This report is designed to help colleges and those with regional responsibilities to develop strategies for ensuring adequate and sufficient provision in their localities. The project on which the report is based drew on the views of colleges, local authorities, TECs, regional and national bodies. The focus is on college provision and includes a number of case studies.

The responsibilities of the Funding Councils and local authorities for 'adequacy' and 'sufficiency' are set out in the Further and Higher Education Act, although the terms 'adequate' and 'sufficient' have never been clearly defined. The report explains how funding councils influence provision through the funding methodology, the inspection framework, strategic planning requirements and their regional offices. The importance of the *Charter for Further Education* in safeguarding the rights of individuals and employers is noted. Other influences, such as the demands of students, employers and higher education, and the impact of TEC and central government initiatives, need to be taken into account when planning local provision and the report identifies what information colleges need to use from these sources.

Project participants identified a number of factors which inhibited supra-institutional planning. These included the lack of labour market information disaggregated to a useful level, lack of institutional expertise in planning, poor access to guidance and inadequate accommodation. Colleges identified increasing competition as one of the principal risk factors which might inhibit them from achieving institutional objectives. The report explores the tensions of planning in a competitive market-driven environment.

The extent of local competition colleges face is very variable and a number of collective responses have been devised to develop post-16 strategies. Schools and colleges, TECs and local authorities have developed different kinds of formal and informal partnerships, including local planning forums. TECs, careers services and colleges have worked together to improve guidance by involving parents and local communities, and providing area-wide destination data for school students.

Where local competition renders such co-operation impracticable, the report has examples of individual college initiatives to improve their strategic position through opening up niche markets or enhancing internal planning processes.

The report also approaches adequate and sufficient provision from a student perspective, an entitlement which is underwritten by the *Charter for Further Education*. A framework developed by FEU for auditing and planning adequate provision for adult learners has been adapted to meet the needs of young people. Practitioners identified a number of areas where school-leavers need more support; for instance, in the transition to adulthood, in

pastoral care, careers guidance and work experience. Young people's needs for access to financial support, IT and the development of broad skills were also identified, as were the interest of third parties such as parents and employers in their progress.

The report includes information on recent government initiatives and on plans outlined in the White Paper *Competitiveness: Forging ahead* to improve the working of the market. Among current developments are moves to secure impartial guidance, explicit inspection criteria, regular monitoring of trends in provision and plans to review funding and qualifications across post-16 provision. The report concludes with recommendations on tackling issues which are central to the evolution of the FE market and the establishment of mutually beneficial collaboration in a competitive environment.

Anna Reisenberger
Development Officer, FEDA

Preface

This report will be of interest and use to:

- senior managers and governors in FE institutions
- those in Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and regional government offices charged with the provision of youth training and with commenting on the strategic plans of FE providers
- local education authorities (LEAs) trying to make sure that provision in their areas offers choice and diversity at an affordable cost
- the Further Education Funding Councils for England and Wales (FEFC(E) and FEFC(W) respectively) and the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) in their collective search for ways of increasing participation, responsiveness and economy

This report looks at what influences the securing of adequate and sufficient facilities and describes some of the ways the FE sector is responding. It extends earlier work undertaken by the Further Education Unit and published in *Securing adequate provision for adult learners* (1994), which has been used by both LEAs and colleges to review and improve provision.

As responsibility for the provision of FE for young people is spread over a range of organisations and systems, the research included discussions with staff in FE, tertiary and sixth-form colleges, Further Education Funding Councils, TECs, the former Employment Department and Department for Education and an LEA.

This publication outlines the responsibilities and interests of different stakeholders at national, regional and college level, current concerns and practical responses. The primary focus is on how organisations are making sense of their own external environments, how they are affecting that environment and in turn using local feedback to modify their own provision and processes. There is no attempt to reach a precise definition of 'adequate and sufficient' nor to focus on provision for particular groups, e.g. adult learners, ethnic minorities or students with learning difficulties and disabilities, who are the subject of more detailed studies (e.g. *Disabilities, learning difficulties and further education*, FEU, 1995).

FEDA is grateful to colleagues in the sector who contributed to and commented on the report, and in particular to David Goldsworthy, the consultant, who undertook the study to a very tight schedule.

Anna Reisenberger
Development Officer, FEDA

Section 1: Statutory responsibilities and stakeholders' interests

1.1 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SECURING ADEQUATE AND SUFFICIENT FE PROVISION

Before the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, colleges and LEAs had a long history of strategic planning work aimed at attempting to identify and respond to community and industry needs. In addition, through the work of inspectors and the internal evaluation strategies of institutions, there have been for some time local mechanisms for monitoring and improving the quality of FE.

As a result of the 1992 Act, the Funding Councils have a duty to secure adequate FE facilities for adults, i.e. those 19 and over and for young people aged 16-18 choosing to study part-time. For 16-18 year olds studying full-time, the Councils have the duty of securing sufficient facilities 'to all who want such facilities' (a phrase omitted in relation to 'adequate' provision). The Councils must secure such facilities that are 'at such places, of such character and are so equipped' as to meet 'the reasonable needs' and take account of 'the different abilities and aptitudes' of all to whom the duty extends. They also have to have regard to full-time education provided by others (e.g. schools) and to be cost-effective.

This report focuses on provision for young people in colleges and the relevant part of the Act is reproduced in Appendix 1. In the debate on the Bill, ministers suggested that the duty to secure 'sufficient' provision is 'a somewhat stronger duty' than to secure 'adequate' facilities.

Further discussion on the interpretation of terms in the Act can be found in Appendix 1 of *Securing Adequate Provision for Adult Learners* (FEU, 1994).

1.2 DUTIES OF THE FUNDING COUNCILS

While the Funding Councils are not directly involved in institutional planning, they are having a significant effect on the how FE institutions view issues of adequacy and sufficiency of provision.

Their principal means of influence are through:

- the funding methodologies

By adjusting tariff values, the Councils are able to stimulate or restrict provision in particular areas, give additional support or fee remission to

particular groups of students, to give extra prominence to functions, such as initial assessment and guidance, or to encourage more attention to programme completion and achievement.

FEFC(W) also employs mechanisms such as weighting by post-code, to give support to deprived areas.

- the inspection framework

Each institution undergoing inspection is graded on a scale of 1-5 on their 'responsiveness and range of provision'. In the report of its first year of inspections, FEFC(E) noted 'Colleges are quick to respond to government, regional and local initiatives' and 90% were awarded a grade 1 or 2 (*Quality and Standards in FE in England*, FEFC(E), 1994). The report also reflects inspectors' notions of adequacy and sufficiency in their comments on programme areas, access to provision, resources and achievements of students. In addition, the Council has made it clear that it will not fund any growth in any programme areas which have received a 4 or 5 grading in an inspection.

- strategic planning

Colleges have to show how their strategic plan demonstrates a response to identified local needs; they also have to consult TECs on their commentaries supporting applications for recurrent funding. In its advice to colleges FEFC(E) also stresses that 'information on significant planned changes in provision is important to help the Council assess the sufficiency and adequacy of facilities for FE' (*Colleges Strategic Plans 1995-96 and beyond*, Circular 95/02).

- the regional dimension

Regional Funding Council staff and advisory committees have a remit to keep an overview of college strategic plans and local demand, in order to see whether the nature and quality of provision is meeting demand. Officers have examined local provision and enrolment patterns, in some cases focusing on specific curriculum areas such as construction.

The Councils also address their responsibilities through their assessments of proposals for capital funding (Circular 94/06), mergers between colleges (Circular 95/09) and commentary on proposals for new sixth forms in schools (Circular 95/08). Specialist inquiries, such as the Tomlinson Committee on students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and the Kennedy Committee on widening participation, demonstrate the FEFC(E)'s concern to identify and promote good practice in securing adequate and sufficient facilities for all students.

1.3 THE ROLE OF TECs AND REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL GROUPINGS

In 1994 the Competitiveness White Paper announced that £20 million would be made available to 'help colleges in England to create, develop and/or maintain FE provision in response to priorities for the local labour markets'. The £10 million Development Fund is designed to promote greater flexibility and access, whereas the Competitiveness Fund is designed to increase responsiveness to the projected needs of the labour market. Regional and sub-regional groups, with membership from TECs, FEFC regional committees and regional government offices, will:

- receive and analyse labour market information assessments and the college plans for the region/sub-region
- take a view of the adequacy of the planned provision across the region/sub-region
- advise the FEFC regional committee on possible gaps in provision and priorities for action

(The New FE Arrangements, A Handbook for Government Offices, TECs and Colleges, Employment Department, 1994).

1.4 THE CHARTER FOR FURTHER EDUCATION

This provides a statement of entitlement for both the student and the employer. The Charter implies a view of what constitutes sufficient and adequate facilities for the consumer, since what falls below the standards is deemed inadequate. Students have rights to impartial information and advice, appropriate standards of teaching and the management of learning, equal opportunities, and choice of provision.

Some of these are the responsibilities of individual colleges (which have to set them out in their own charters), some are local authorities, and others are the careers services. If opportunities are not available in a reasonable distance, students have a right to complain to the Funding Councils, and ultimately to the Secretary of State.

1.5 OTHERS WITH AN INTEREST IN ADEQUATE AND SUFFICIENT FE

There is inevitably a tension between national or regional planning and providing 'choice and diversity' for students. While all parties interviewed for the project agreed that the individual should be at the centre of notions of adequacy and sufficiency, the following need to be taken into account:

- the labour market

What are employers defining as adequate and sufficient? How is a balance to be struck between what young people say they want to do and what are believed to be employment possibilities?

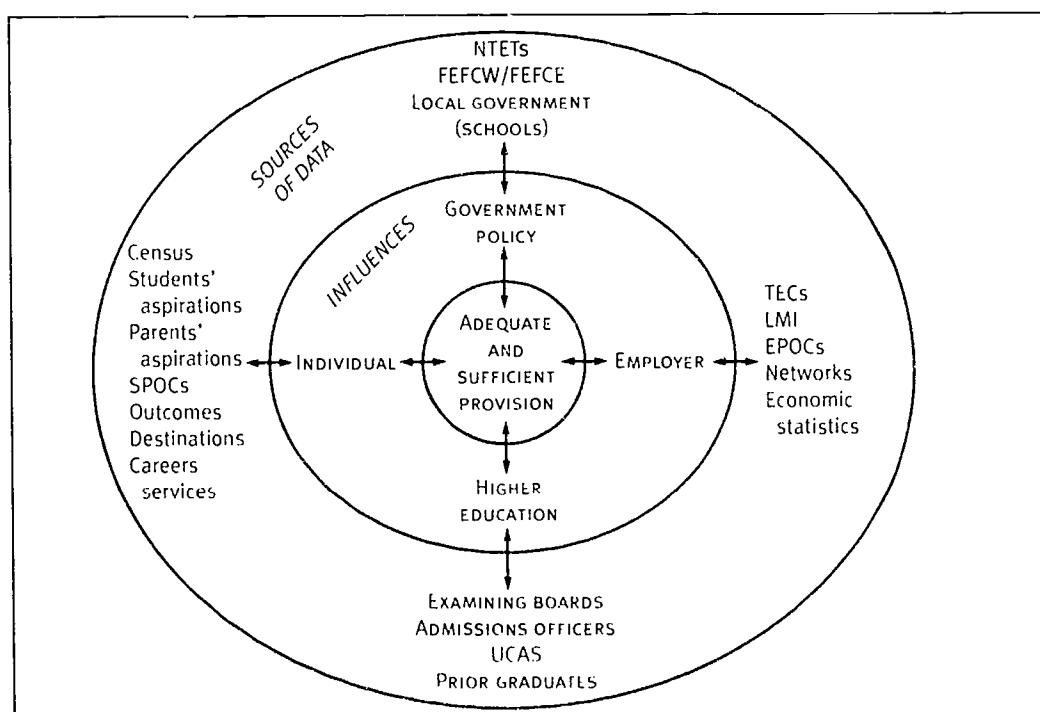
- 'the great and the good'

There is a widespread notion that more of the population need to reach higher levels of training and education (c.f. the National Targets for Education and Training). What needs to be done at organisational and supra-organisational levels to stimulate and create demand?

- higher education

Increasingly FE is a pathway to higher levels of study. Are the links with these bodies adequate? Is the college responsive to recruitment signals from admissions officers? Is information gathered on the university experiences of FE graduates?

Part of the art of managing FE is the attempt to juggle conflicting messages coming from these different sources and respond to the legitimate expectations of all these reference points. Figure 1 shows the key groups who help define adequacy and sufficiency for young people and some of the major sources of information which need to be gathered in order to be able to understand the expectations of these disparate groups.



12 *Figure 1.*

1.6 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Taking this broad view of the forces determining adequacy and sufficiency, FE institutions, as well as national, regional, sub-regional and local planning bodies, need a sophisticated approach to information gathering and utilisation. Data needs to be gathered from the following key sources.

EXISTING PROVISION

- TEC-funded youth training
- school enrolments and projections — school prospectuses, DFEE statistics, LEAs
- current and projected college and sixth-form college enrolment patterns (possibly including analysis of inter-regional movements of students) — forecasts in college strategic plans, end of year student enrolment statistics (EYSES), individual student records (ISR), further education statistical record (FESR);
- programmes at specialist national colleges which cater for the region's students
- inspection reports from the FEFCs or Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)
- FE programmes in HE institutions
- any other provision for 16-18 year olds provided by the voluntary sector or by private companies

DEMAND FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

- population data — Office of Population and Census, local authorities, youth cohort studies
- student and parent interests — careers services, college/school links, student complaints, under- and over-subscribed programmes; surveys of no-shows or drop-outs
- outcome data which influences future choice — public information on student achievement, student perceptions of courses

DEMAND FROM HE

- current enrolment patterns and plans — Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC), prospectuses, admissions officers
- graduate destinations surveys — universities

- universities and colleges admissions service (UCAS) forms
- commercial reports on chances of admission to different universities
- examining board reports

DEMAND FROM EMPLOYERS

- broad employment trends — TEC labour market information, education strategic forums, LEA development units, industry bodies
- developments in major firms or local areas — personal contact with employers and employer/union organisations, specific surveys, chambers of commerce, job vacancy advertisements in the press
- longer term trends — DFEE publications, e.g. Skills and Enterprise Network, Youth Cohort Study; labour market research organisations e.g. Institute of Employment Studies
- specific course requirements — full-cost recovery courses run by sector
- employer perceptions of colleges — surveys, press coverage, feedback on employing college 'graduates'

GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND GENERAL TRENDS

- FE — FEFC steers, National Targets for Education and Training, FEDA publications and research reports, NCVQ and SCAA, Basic Skills Agency (formerly ALBSU)
- European Union initiatives
- general developments — Confederation of British Industry, employer and professional associations, regional government offices, Policy Studies Institute and other research bodies
- political steers — party policies

Most of the above sources of information, particularly those dealing with quantitative data, need to be considered by those responsible for strategic planning at institutional, local, regional and national levels. What tends to vary is the level of aggregation or disaggregation required in order to make the data useful.

Section 2: Current issues and responses

2.1 KEY ISSUES

FEFC(E) recently analysed 20% of college strategic plans and found that increasing competition was identified as one of the principal risks to the achievement of college objectives (FEFC(E), 1994). FEDA's study also found that competition was considered to be a major impediment to ensuring adequate and sufficient provision; other issues included:

- the lack of good data
- the need to clearly identify the institutional niche
- the paucity of institutional planning expertise and experience
- access to sufficient guidance services
- lack of resources for accommodation and for discretionary grants to students

An exploration of these issues and responses to the challenges follows.

2.2 PLANNING IN A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Competition and its relationship with notions of adequacy and sufficiency is complex. To some extent there has always been a degree of competition between providers — for young people leaving school, for contracts with local firms, for funding for programmes for people who are unemployed. However, this competition tended to be at the margin — ultimately, an LEA would umpire disputes over territory and be lender of the last resort if there was a funding shortfall. With differing levels of success, mechanisms existed at local authority or regional advisory council level to try to ensure sufficient and adequate provision through strategic planning and match the supply of places to the demand.

In an attempt to develop a national approach to FE, to establish national standards of quality and efficiency, and to increase the autonomy and flexibility of FE providers, recent reforms have removed many protections and dispensed with much of the supra-institutional planning. In the post-16 market, colleges (and schools, by opting out or using the threat of opting out) can increasingly offer what they want, to whom they like. Of course, colleges have to notify the Funding Councils of any significant planned changes in provision and the Councils can comment on plans for new sixth forms. However, there are limits on the Councils' mandate and their influence on the provision for young people in the state sector and independent schools, on TEC-funded provision, on the voluntary and private sectors or on industrial training.

Much of the concern expressed by FE institutions at the increasing competition is because of a loss of an over-arching view of provision and perceptions of over-provision in some fields and under-provision in others. Over-provision could be seen as giving more choice to the student, but if it results in the closure of uneconomic classes, there is considerable disruption for individual students.

While this study found that national and regional bodies were quite positive about the benefits of increased competition, the providing institutions take a less sanguine approach and demonstrate considerable lack of faith in the self-regulating hand of the market. Yet there is quite widespread agreement that the increased freedoms have brought benefits. Much being done by the Funding Councils is seen as enlightened and liberating. Respondents tend to believe that competition has made them review many established practices and more vigorously seek efficiencies. Competition has encouraged a sharper focus on meeting the needs of the clients — whether these be student, parent, employer or HE institution.

However, increased competition is perceived to have a potentially damaging effect on the range of provision because of:

- the vulnerability of young people to unscrupulous marketing
- the concentration on young people who are relatively easily accessible and the concern that some, such as those disaffected with school or those with disabilities, may still slip through the gaps in the system
- the incentive to go for growth in the cheaper courses, at the expense of newer, more expensive training
- the loss of centres of excellence built up over several years as other institutions move into the market without adequate staff and facilities
- the inability of initial approval mechanisms to ensure that new courses are offered only after rigorous quality assessments and due consideration of neighbouring provision
- the effect that aggressive intra-institutional marketing could have on the wider community, including parents and employers
- the potential conflict of interest between an institution's need to maximise its funding units to ensure growth or even survival, and learners' needs

2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Regional and historical differences have a major effect on how different institutions are attempting to achieve adequate and sufficient provision. This affects the willingness of college opinion leaders to play an active role in developing a local or regional perspective on adequacy and sufficiency.

The extent of competition faced by different institutions varies considerably from one local area to another.

For example, at the extreme end of a competitive continuum there might be an FE college operating in a region not directly served by any other college, though there is one sixth-form college with which good relations have been maintained. The schools are all 11-16 and so far the head teachers have shown little interest in adding sixth forms to their schools or in opting out. The LEA works well with the college, even after incorporation, and would not look favourably on any school wishing to add a sixth form. The TEC also works closely with the college and the joint use of funding has resulted in the development of a new, highly specialised training service for local industry. Staying-on rates are good and improving, and should enable both the FE college and the sixth-form college to meet growth targets without raiding each other's turf.

At the other extreme, there might be a college which is one of five FE colleges and two sixth-form colleges in a massively deprived city centre community. The colleges have been aggressively marketing provision, offering students such incentives as free meals or free books. Although staying on rates are low, there is an over provision of places in many course areas and most institutions have spaces in classes. Tensions are such that the local TEC meets with each institution individually — the colleges refuse to discuss in public anything which is deemed to be commercial and confidential. The local schools are increasingly adding on, or expanding, sixth forms and using the threat of opting out whenever the local authority seeks to curtail planned changes.

Responses to these different situations have led to the use of a range of strategies: highly structured collective responses involving a variety of local providers; partnerships between smaller sub-groups; and independent initiatives and joint arrangements.

2.4 LOCAL PLANNING FORUMS

To complement individual institutional planning, many believe that it is important to have local forums with an overview of provision through which local educational institutions can be part of a broader strategic approach to FE.

Collective responses seem to have emerged with a variety of motivations: a desire to avoid all-out competition between providers and to bring some predictability to the market, a desire to ensure that young people were

provided with a seamless web of provision, ensure that gaps in provision are identified and filled. These require nurturing and trust between key stakeholders.

Where there are no obvious umpires at local levels, providers can become deadlocked. For example, one sixth-form college when formed had a broad agreement with the local college about who did what. With a change in local enrolment patterns over time, provision has been skewed in the sixth-form college and led to more boys being recruited than girls. The sixth-form college now wants to alter its mix of courses, but relations with the FE college have been affected. The sixth-form college is reluctant to make the changes on its own, as it believes that this will lead to retaliation by the college and start a costly and potentially damaging recruitment battle between the institutions. Yet no local forums or mechanisms exist to allow discussion.

In a similar vein, colleges often build up a reputation with particular groups and attract a disproportionate enrolment from that group or community. Such individual and community choice is important to respect. However, specialist provision and targeting skews the local patterns of enrolment and makes it difficult to view issues of adequacy only from the vantage point of one institution. Broader overviews are needed to check such issues as the aggregate range of provision being accessed by that group, success rates of students and destinations.

A wide range of functions at a supra-institutional level are still sought including generic marketing of FE and training, the development of comprehensive local databases to help identify gaps in provision, and research work on issues which affects the totality of local provision, e.g. the extent of youth involvement in the informal economy.

Regional and sub-regional groupings of the Funding Councils, TECs and regional government offices are expected to play a useful role in generating such overviews. The intention is that these meetings will take a broad view of provision and consider the effect of not only provision funded by the Councils but that by the TECs, and the impact of new developments in the areas of youth credits and modern apprenticeships.

Local government is still seen as having an important role to play both because it reflects local opinion and continues to have responsibility for schools.

TOWARD A POST-16 STRATEGY — SOUTHWARK LEA

Operating in one of the most educationally deprived areas in the country, Southwark LEA is committed to securing sufficient and adequate post-16 provision across the borough. It has attempted to fill what was perceived as a local planning vacuum at the pre-degree level through the formation of a post-16 forum. The forum is chaired by the LEA and comprises representatives from FE colleges, head teachers, special schools, community education, career service, voluntary sector, the TEC, and HE institutions.

The forum has built up a detailed database on all provision in the borough and is extending this exercise to include the work of private providers and the youth service. It has managed a number of generic projects, including commissioning a market research company to conduct a survey of educational awareness and educational levels on five deprived inner-city estates. This work has highlighted the high levels of qualifications of some groups of recent migrants, the need to expand English as a Second Language provision and significant under-achievement among young white males. The project also found a lack of awareness among local employers of the actual skill-base of the local community, and a concomitant reluctance to employ local people.

For many inner-city residents, their post-code on their application form is a barrier to employment. From this study it became clear that no-one knew what skills existed in the area and that population migration, both from within the United Kingdom and from overseas, was constantly changing the skills mix.

The work of the forum is still evolving, but it is now moving into issues connected with generic or shared marketing, facilitation of joint school-college curriculum planning for the 14-16 age group, and investigations of travel to study patterns. As part of its local democratic function, consideration has also been given to developing mechanisms for obtaining community input into the planning of local FE provision.

Another example is a consortium of local schools and FE institutions working together initially to focus on young people who were not staying on in post-16 education.

FORGING PARTNERSHIPS — EAST CARDIFF COLLEGIUM

Coleg Glan Hafren (Cardiff Tertiary College) has formed a collegium with local schools to jointly sponsor and deliver General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) to disaffected young people. The college and schools were concerned that somewhere between 16% and 23% of young people were being lost to further training once they reached 16. This concern was shared by other key local players. The LEA, as a neutral player, agreed to chair the collegium, the local TEC provided resources to co-ordinate the initiative and to pay for the release of staff, and FEFC(W) helped with advice on funding issues.

Prior to incorporation, the local authority had undertaken a significant rationalisation of provision and in the eastern part of the city only one school had a sixth form. There had been a history of joint planning and major providers wanted to maintain a co-operative approach where possible. Management of the collegium is carried out in the following way: senior staff set the strategic plan for the joint activities and then curriculum managers in the schools and college put the joint arrangements into operation.

In its early phase, the collegium has concentrated on helping develop GNVQs in four vocational areas in the schools and work is now under way to develop new provision for 14-16 year old students at risk. Developing this partnership has not always been easy and considerable effort has gone into fostering trust and to making sure that staff in both schools and the college understand each other's cultures, especially funding regimes and financial constraints. To minimise misunderstandings, a detailed memorandum of co-operation has been drawn up, covering such areas as quality development and assurance, communication, administration, marketing and finance.

Through the Single Regeneration Budget many areas are receiving substantial increases in funding for training, and since bids have to be co-ordinated, partnerships have been promoted. One local authority, wary of further duplication of facilities, is seeking to channel these funds through existing collaborative mechanisms. As this initiative generally covers a wide area and includes several TECs, it is resulting in a more regional approach to planning provision.

2.5 LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Many areas have no single body representing all relevant local providers involved in the delivery of education and training to the 16-18 age group. Instead, there is often a wide variety of looser groupings involving partnerships between several different organisations.

Examples include:

- a TEC and four local colleges using development funding for a series of collaborative projects aimed at improving overall provision and marketing the area both nationally and in Europe — areas covered included unitisation of the curriculum and management information system (MIS) developments on tracking
- another college is working with the education and employment departments of a local authority to ensure that training and FE is a part of the council's economic development plan
- a group of colleges is starting collaboration on non-contentious areas, such as staff development as a prelude to more strategic work
- cross-college groups are looking at European-wide developments: making joint bids for external funding, identifying ways of Europeanising the curriculum, developing electronic links to other European training bodies
- the association of Welsh colleges (Fforwm) has nominated lead college principals for specific areas, including strategic planning, in order to ensure that supra-organisational views of structures and issues are maintained
- most colleges have representation at local meetings of head teachers
- TVEI groups are continuing to provide vehicles for schools and colleges to discuss curriculum partnerships and progression routes for students
- the colleges and schools in one town have produced a joint marketing strategy for post-16 education, so minimising the public perception of competition and lack of coherence
- partnerships and compacts with local HE providers have ensured smooth progression routes for students

2.6 INDEPENDENT INITIATIVES BY COLLEGES

In some areas, when competition has been particularly intense, independent initiatives are considered the only way forward. In others, such responses are being run in parallel with co-operative strategies.

Strategies include:

- a college identifying schools with particularly low staying-on rates and working directly with those schools to establish link courses, to franchise GNVQs and to seek to foster a climate in which students expect to progress to that college
- taking the college strategic plan to the local council's education committee for comment and input
- a college helping schools to write funding submissions for European funds
- college curriculum heads, after training, being given case-load responsibilities for developing links with key local companies
- each senior staff member of a sixth-form college with responsibility for liaising with one of the college's feeder schools and expected to regularly attend public events at the school, to meet with careers teachers and curriculum leaders and generally nurture links with the school
- using census data broken down to ward level and comparing the community profile with the college intake by cross-referencing enrolments against post-codes. Some colleges have also used this to analyse the curriculum choices and destinations of students from different classes or ethnic groups, and have adjusted their offer and targeted provision to make a more adequate response to local needs

2.7 IMPROVED INFORMATION

Planning what courses to offer what students is often considered more of an art than a science. However, there is a widespread belief that better data is needed to inform the decision-making process. National and regional information is available through such sources as the former Employment Department's Skills and Enterprise Network publications and through the work of national research bodies. The new regional government offices provide a clearer focus for regional planning information particularly on developments related to infrastructure, economic renewal and housing.

REPACKAGING LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION — DFEE

The DFEE is now providing regular briefings to the FEFC(E) on national developments in the labour market and raising issues for consideration by the FE sector. These briefings have included: recent changes in employment, unemployment and vacancies; changes in employment patterns by gender, type of work and industry; the role of small firms; the supply of labour; skill needs; and FE trends.

This work is constantly being up-dated and made more sensitive. Thus, for example, analysis is currently under way to look at current and likely turnover and the effect this will have on the demand for skills. On the surface an industry might be declining and apparently not in need of significant new training. If, however, it has an ageing workforce with high retirement rates then this may camouflage a substantial need for continuous training.

For many FE courses the qualifications do not link directly to any one occupation and work is under way to attempt to obtain a greater understanding of the flow between such courses and the labour market. A body of work has also been commissioned to identify best practice in college-employer relations.

Labour market information provided by TECs is often considered too out of date and at too high a level of aggregation to be of use to colleges. It is generally felt that labour market information needs to be better tailored to the needs of colleges, disaggregated at lower levels and more sophisticated than simple models of likely demand for different occupational groupings. On the other hand, contributors to this project argued the case for providing capital-wide data in London, disaggregated when relevant, for example, for areas or occupations with limited travel to work patterns.

TECs are responding to the needs in various ways:

- a TEC is establishing a database on local firms and working with colleges to encourage follow-up of those involved in Investors In People
- another TEC has integrated its labour market information function with the local authority's economic development unit, so avoiding duplication and facilitating economies of scale. The combined unit will be located alongside a range of 'shop-front' advisory services provided to the local community
- a TEC has released a regional report mapping the destinations and educational successes of local young people from school, through FE, youth training, and into HE and work

In addition, it is important, as some TECs have acknowledged, that colleges are recognised as providing labour market data as well as receiving it. FE institutions often have access to a mass of labour market information and are well placed to contribute to the development of a regional view of trends. The process of developing labour market information is clearly two way.

Notwithstanding their criticism of external labour market data, colleges also acknowledge that often they are not especially good at using data to assist with decision making.

Colleges are tackling this in various ways; for example, one college has appointed a labour market intelligence officer whose role is to gather and repackage data on labour market trends.

USING LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION — NORTH WARWICKSHIRE COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ART

The importance of gathering good labour market information and then ensuring that this information has an effect on curriculum provision is widely recognised. The process for making this happen, however, is all too often neglected. North Warwickshire College is attempting to bring rhetoric and reality together by the appointment of a college staff member dedicated to this task.

This person has primary responsibility for carrying out an in-depth analysis of the labour market, using both hard and soft data, and repackaging the results of this at the course level. Divisional directors and programme managers are given labour market information on general trends in the study area, specific local information on skill shortages and difficult to fill positions, information from the census and an analysis of course enrolment trends.

This work is then used to develop programme and divisional plans, and collated and reviewed, via the annual corporate planning process. Thus, for example, the college has identified that labour market signals, and consequentially the course mix, has been tending to favour young girls. The college wants to maintain, as far as possible, a gender balance and is looking at a range of new course options which are likely to attract young men.

- open days are in use in many institutions and an effort made to bring employers in to visit and see the college facilities. Such occasions are used to glean softer, more subjective, information on developments in the labour market
- several colleges are monitoring job vacancies and wage rates in the local press
- most institutions are exploring ways of using their contacts and data better. One college is conducting a survey of all those who contacted the college but failed to enrol, while others are matching post-codes of current students with census data to identify areas of under-recruitment

As the databases of the Funding Councils become fully operational, they will be immensely powerful tools for considering issues of adequacy and sufficiency. Already the Councils are starting to analyse data, for example from college strategic plans, and feed information back to the sector. There is an expectation that this will continue and that effort will be spent on both analysis and feedback at local as well as regional and national levels. Disaggregations of data by course and industry areas are also sought. However, classification problems make it difficult to link data on courses with data from industry and occupational analyses, and it is hoped that these will be addressed as the data collection systems mature.

- A regional committee of the FEFC(E) is monitoring college requests to drop courses and seeking TEC feedback on perceptions of the effect of such decisions. In one case where a college wanted to move out of an area with low levels of demand, a check was made with local TECs which felt that the course was needed in the region and other colleges were invited to pick up the slack
- FEFC(W) worked with individual colleges in the Heads of the Valleys area of South Wales and identified data relating to the range of provision, learners and the community and context in which they operate. The project identified a range of issues for further attention including the need to expand opportunities at foundation levels, target areas with low participation rates and to increase outreach provision in areas poorly served by public transport. The project report suggested an assessment model which identified relationships between the data and produced a range of measures which could be used for assessing sufficiency and adequacy.

FEFC(W) has incorporated calculations based on deprivation indices into funding, in this way encouraging colleges to widen participation from under-represented groups in the locality.

AN INDEX OF DEPRIVATION — FEFC(W)

FEFC(W) is attempting to secure an increase in the participation rate of under-represented groups. To help colleges respond to the extra costs of targeting, recruiting and supporting these groups, the recurrent funding model contains a funding element related to the recruitment of students from deprived neighbourhoods. A deprivation index has been derived from an index of socio-economic conditions calculated by the Welsh Office for each electoral ward in Wales. The index is based on the following eight factors:

- unemployment
- the economically active population
- low socio-economic groups in the population
- population loss in the 20 to 59 years age group
- the permanently sick in the population
- overcrowding in housing
- basic housing amenities
- standard mortality rate

This information allows for a rank ordering of levels of deprivation in the different wards. The list is then divided into four groups and students recruited from the most deprived group bring with them an extra unit of funding, the next quartile bring half an extra unit, the third quartile bring a quarter of an extra funding unit, and the last quartile bring none.

College enrolment data is collected by post-code and apportioned to electoral wards in order to develop an aggregate number of students recruited from each ward.

2.8 STRATEGIC POSITIONING

Individual institutions are having to spend considerable time and energy identifying their own market niches and in developing the networks and relations needed to be successful in those chosen areas. A significant number of respondents commented on their concerns at how best to cater for disaffected youths, mainly males. In some cases, colleges are seeking to specialise in a few areas of training. Several included in this survey were providing training for national and/or international markets. For example:

- one college faced with a massive decline in day-release students is now expanding full-time provision. This is requiring a major rethink of the curriculum offer and massive staff development. There will be a restructuring of pre-vocational/foundation level provision and the development of exemplar teaching models across the institution. The college will invest heavily in ensuring that students are exposed to a range of course options rather than allowing individual departments to advise potential students. A common core skills programme is being provided across the college and good externally produced materials are being made available to staff rather than investing scarce resources to develop imperfect local products.

OPENING NEW NICHES — FILTON COLLEGE

Through its strategic planning work, Filton College identified that it was not recruiting strongly from an outer urban semi-rural part of its catchment area. It also identified occupational demand in equine management, animal care and land-based industries and potential student interest in these fields.

As an urban college, it was not well placed to open this niche. However, approaches were made to a local agricultural college. This college was keen to diversify its range of courses, in need of new students and searching for ways of reducing unit costs. Both organisations stood to gain from the arrangement and a successful suite of courses is now under way.

In the animal care area, strong links have been forged with the local zoo. This in turn has led to some invaluable publicity and resulted in a doubling of course enrolments.

- one sixth-form college has proved particularly effective at recruiting students from one ethnic community. Students from that community travel across the city to attend classes in what is seen as a culturally appropriate establishment
- another newly established sixth-form college has diversified its curriculum such that it now considers itself more of an age-segmented FE college than a traditional sixth-form college

AN AGE-SEGMENTED FE COLLEGE — NEWHAM SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Starting with a new remit and new facilities, Newham Sixth Form College has been able to take a fresh look at the needs of young students in an educationally deprived, multi-racial, inner-city borough. It has consciously avoided becoming an elitist institution focusing only on A levels, but has set itself a target to offer a blend of vocational and academic courses in an environment designed to meet the needs of young people.

The college places a major emphasis on providing a congenial, clean and safe environment in which students can learn; in turn, it expects a high standard of responsibility from students. Little touches have been introduced which set the tone of the college, including the employment of a cleaner during the day to keep the buildings looking good all the time.

In recognition of the economic and educational difficulties faced by many of the students, the college provides free meals and keeps self-study facilities open in evenings and during holidays.

Colleges are concentrating on improving their responsiveness and in some cases, research and development is supported by funding from local TECs, FEFC regional offices, the Prince's Trust, City Challenge and other parties with an interest in local regeneration:

- a regional FEFC(E) committee, in response to employer requests for multi-skilling and a greater focus on core skills, has undertaken a study of how colleges are responding to this need
- a TEC is funding local colleges to conduct audits to identify weak spots in provision — courses which need to be reviewed or dropped and new courses which need to be considered
- several colleges are pursuing curriculum reforms, particularly through modularisation and CAT schemes and expanding core skills assessment and support. These mechanisms are expected to increase student choice, increase motivation through providing more regular evidence of progression and enable students to dip in and out of study as personal circumstances permit
- the Prince's Trust is being used to fund intensive personal development programmes for employed and unemployed inner-city youths
- outreach initiatives are being developed involving youth workers and college staff to reach disaffected young people who do not take part in any post-school education or training

2.9 ENHANCED PLANNING SKILLS AND SYSTEMS

Colleges are wrestling with a variety of ways of ensuring smooth links between strategic and operational plans and appropriate college-wide involvement in the development and implementation of the plans. Many respondents identified weaknesses in current planning processes and, in spite of progress, a continuing lack of responsiveness to industry. There is a tendency for the planning process to be too top-down, the externally available data to be poorly used, the organisational planning structures and cycles to be unclear to key external stakeholders and the capacity to shift curriculum foci inadequate. Improvements under way involve setting up new processes and procedures and extending and enhancing the planning skills of college staff. Senior managers are also concerned to develop an environment in which change is the norm and in which the revolution is indeed permanent.

The following are examples of strategies involving staff:

- one principal has established a rolling series of focus group meetings across the college which provide him with the opportunity to listen to the suggestions of staff across the organisation. These groups provide an opportunity for good ideas to be heard unhindered by hierarchy
- another principal meets four times a year with each senior manager to review the extent to which strategic planning tasks have been completed. Similarly senior managers meet with their own staff to ensure that the strategic plan is being implemented
- staff development is taking place to help staff better use meetings with employers and other external groups and individuals to both identify and realise new business opportunities
- another college is developing a strategic staffing plan in parallel with the strategic plan and to ensure that the college has the right blend of skills to deliver its long-term vision

One college is mounting a local conference on using labour market information and will include local employers as well as college curriculum heads:

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP — WOOLWICH COLLEGE

Concerned that local authority economic planning has not ever been closely integrated with FE and training plans, Woolwich College has developed close links with the Borough of Greenwich. Through working with the LEA and the economic development unit, the college has played a major role in the production of the Borough's economic strategy.

As part of this process, the college and the Greenwich Waterfront Development Partnership have brought together trainers, employers, trade unionists and government officers from a variety of local, regional and national bodies to establish mechanisms for the dissemination of relevant information on current and expected training needs, and employment trends.

There is a recognition that much curriculum planning takes place in a vacuum, that considerable information exists on national trends, but that it is difficult to know its significance locally. The process is expected to:

- improve understanding of what labour market information is currently available
- identify alternative types and sources of labour market information
- improve understanding of the current role and activities of local, regional and national planning and development agencies
- establish better ways of working together by considering models from elsewhere in the UK/Europe
- increase the sensitivity of curriculum managers to labour market signals

A number of colleges are building on traditional techniques such as students' perceptions of courses (SPOC) surveys to gain student data which is fed into the planning process:

- participative planning techniques are in use in some Access courses to encourage student feedback and rapid changes to courses
- focus groups are in use with current and past students to gain an in-depth picture of how they view their FE experiences
- one college is using the identity/swipe card as both a way of monitoring internal activities and also as a 'key to the door' to attract new students. As part of the induction the card is issued as a badge of belonging which gives students access to the open learning centre, car park and other college facilities

2.10 IMPROVED GUIDANCE

Across FE, there is a growing recognition of the part educational and careers guidance plays in ensuring young people have access to opportunities most appropriate to their needs. Indeed, in many of the institutions visited as part of this study, the guidance facilities were highly visible, friendly and inviting places located near the main entrance.

Colleges have to balance the labour market signals with the course requests of individual students. If they do not manage this, then they are faced with a dilemma: to try to persuade the student to enter a course which has obvious employment prospects or to meet the student's choice, recognising that many students use FE as a stepping stone to HE and that the correlation between initial study and eventual career is relatively weak.

In order to provide impartial advice, college guidance services are sometimes placed in the position of having to refer students to neighbouring, competing institutions. The issue of progression in FE is important and, in circumstances of significant inter-institution rivalry and competition, one of great complexity.

The careers service has a duty to give an impartial guidance interview to every potential or actual school leaver and is an important source of impartial information for students. Proposed legislation will make careers services, rather than schools, responsible for distributing information on FE and work-based training. This should remove a current source of conflict between schools and colleges in the post-16 market.

Careers services also have an obligation to offer careers guidance to students aged 16-18 and adults on vocational courses in colleges. They can provide managers with local labour market information and destinations data and are encouraged to draw up service level agreements detailing how they will support colleges.

In some instances a fruitful partnership between careers services and the TEC can assist the take-up of FE.

INFORMING CHOICE – TYNESIDE TEC

One way the FE playing field can be made more level is by ensuring that prospective students and their parents are better informed about the consequences of their choices. Tyneside TEC, in conjunction with the four Tyneside Careers Services, set about this task by collecting and assimilating national and local labour market information and destination statistics for young people who completed education and training in Tyneside in 1993.

The results of the survey were published in an easy-to-read, well-produced booklet called 'Your chance for success' (1994). Prior to publication, two groups of year 11 students were asked to comment on the report and revisions made. The book contained the following five sections:

- Jobs: what are the prospects in each industry?
- What happened to young people who completed years 11, 12 and 13 in schools in 1993?
- What happened to young people who completed training programmes in 1993?
- A levels, BTEC Nationals and HE — graduate destinations
- What happened to people who completed college courses in 1993?

The 20,000 copies which were produced enabled every Year 10 and 11 pupil, careers co-ordinator, year tutor and careers officer in Tyneside to have a copy. Letters were sent to year 11 parents informing them of the availability of the book. The letter and summaries of the book were produced in key minority languages to further enhance access.

An evaluation of the report found that 93% of year 11 students had received their own copies, 66% had read some of the book, and 42% of year 11s and 60% of year 10s formed clear ideas about their future education and training as a result of reading the book.

The Tyneside TEC is committed to turning labour market information into intelligence and sees this report as one way it can contribute to this process. Updates will appear regularly. Issues which emerged during the project included: the importance of timing the report to coincide with the period when pupils are making career choices; the need to enhance local compatibility of destination data; the role achievement levels have in influencing choice; computerisation of the information; materials for students with special needs; and the production of a tutor pack.

For example:

- one college invites students to apply for four or five courses and to go through a full interview process with each before deciding with parents and careers staff which one to choose
- others use the induction period for extending the guidance process, so that students can make more informed choices, have appropriate diagnostic assessment or 'taste' different courses
- colleges, as well as schools now recognise that parents are the most significant influences on the career choices of the 16-18 cohort, and work with parents is receiving considerable attention prior to, during and at the end of the course. One college invites parents into the college to discuss HE and the expectations of HE bodies

INVOLVING PARENTS — SOUTH TYNESIDE COLLEGE

South Tyneside College recognises and supports the role of parents in helping their children to choose courses and of then supporting their study. The college has an active careers service with strong links to local feeder schools. In addition, a senior college staff member has been allocated each of these schools and is expected to attend key school meetings and functions. Young school students are encouraged to explore any of their career interests during the guidance process and four or five interviews are often organised with different curriculum managers. Once these have been held, the careers staff, parents and student meet to decide which are the most suitable options.

Links with parents are maintained throughout the student's time on course and the schools are kept informed of overall progress of each cohort. When FE students are considering their next step, the college again invites parents in. They have access to individual sessions and to information sessions on such areas as the expectations of HE institutions and the supporting role of parents.

Although it is sometimes difficult, colleges have to draw the line between marketing and publicity, and clear information, which is integral to guidance. Many colleges have reviewed their information strategies:

- to by-pass information blockages in local schools, some colleges were undertaking direct mailouts of careers information to school students or using radio advertisements focusing on the adult environment of FE colleges. Schools in turn complain of glossy marketing undertaken by colleges with large marketing budgets
- weekend taster programmes have been offered in colleges to encourage young people to experience what FE has to offer

Some colleges are developing outreach guidance so that parents and young people can receive advice and guidance in familiar surroundings and at times convenient to them:

ACCESSIBLE GUIDANCE — BRUNEL COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

Brunel College is attempting to take its message to the community in a variety of ways. Concerned at low staying-on rates in some of the poorer housing estates in the city, the college is taking its guidance and advisory service out to the community. Careers advice clinics are advertised locally and parents and young people are invited to come along to a local venue to discuss FE and training options.

Those who are interested are then invited to obtain more in-depth counselling and advice at the college from both the cross-college advisory staff and the specialist course co-ordinators.

As far as possible, the college is attempting to establish generic provision in core skills areas and to maximise the capacity for students to taste different programme areas. It is hoped that this approach will result in more successful selection of final course area and defer the decision to choose a specialisation until the students have a basic knowledge and experience of different vocational areas.

2.11 RESOURCES

In spite of the growth in funding, many respondents stressed that some of the biggest brakes on the provision of an adequate and sufficient service were related to resourcing — particularly finding new, or upgrading old, accommodation. It was stressed that the recruitment of disaffected and reluctant young learners was hindered by the unattractiveness of many of the older buildings.

The expense of acquiring modern technology continues to be a problem for many institutions. To some extent, this is an unavoidable problem for training providers and in many cases can only be solved by direct access to equipment in the workplace or by the use of simulators. On the other hand, providers may be inhibited from investing in those areas requiring expensive equipment by the lack of a planning framework, which could assure them that they can be confident of a critical mass of students.

Despite concern over the loss of specialist provision, FEFC(E) has found that more colleges intend to introduce new curriculum areas (especially GNVQs) in 1996-7 than withdraw programmes. The highest number of colleges planning to withdraw from a particular curriculum area is the ten withdrawing from engineering provision. But in almost all cases, equivalent provision is deemed available within reasonable travelling distance. Where this is not the case, the regional and sub-regional groupings set up under the Competitiveness White Paper will consider the implications.

Organisations consulted for this study frequently stressed that FE was effective in recruiting students from low-income families. It was, however, proving difficult to hold on to those students because of their financial difficulties, particularly because of the reduction in the availability of discretionary awards. Sixty-one per cent of colleges cited discretionary

awards, and 57% transport policies, as factors which could inhibit achievement of their strategic plans in 1996-7 (*College Strategic Plans*, FEFC(E) Circular 94/30).

While these issues are often beyond the capacity of the individual organisation to resolve there were many innovative approaches being tried:

- one sixth-form college provides low income students with a free hot meal in the middle of the day
- another college has organised, with the local health authority, a free bus service
- timetables have been adjusted to fit around the availability of part-time jobs in the local supermarkets and restaurants
- another college is running courses in the training wings of a major local company — the college pays the cost of the tuition and brings non-company trainees into the programme. The company donates equipment and space and gains local public relations
- several colleges have worked with regional economic development bodies, TECs and major employers to establish purpose built, state of the art, training facilities
- West Midlands colleges faced with a drop in day-release enrolments have collaborated in sustaining a range of engineering opportunities

Section 3: A framework focusing on student entitlement

3.1 HOW IS PROVIDING FE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE DIFFERENT FROM PROVIDING IT FOR ADULTS?

The previous section described some strategies adopted at local level to address the tension between a competitive market and planned responses to meeting local needs. Reference has also been made to balancing individual student demand and the wider needs of the economy. One approach is to focus on the entitlements of the individual to adequate and sufficient provision. This is the rationale for the *Charter for Further Education* and was the impetus behind FEU's framework for adequate provision for adult learners (see Figure 2).

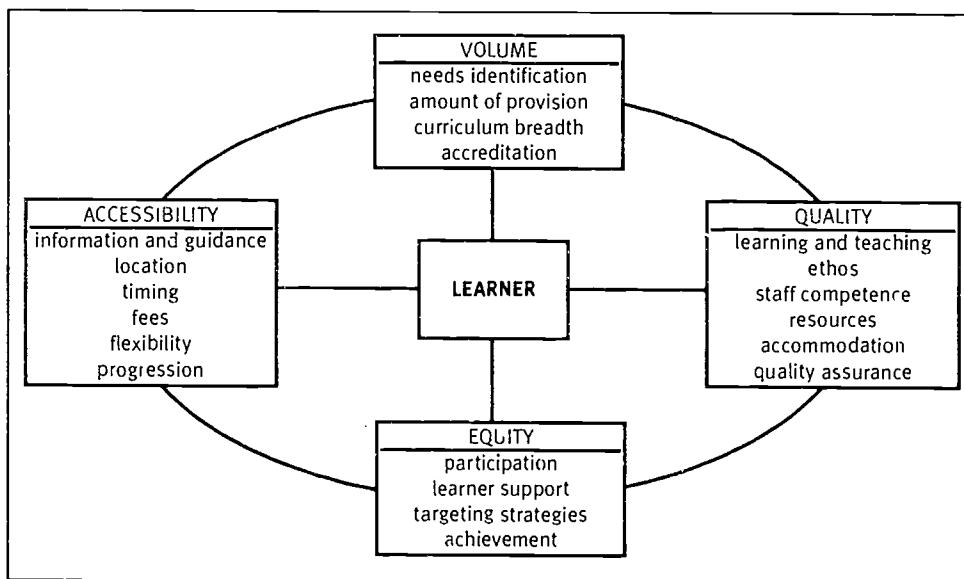


Figure 2. Adequacy framework

College, regional and national organisations suggested adaptations to the adult framework to make it more applicable to young people. The different strands — volume, access, equity and quality — relate closely to the requirements of both the Further and Higher Education Act and the *Charter for Further Education*. The checklists drawn from each strand have been used for institutional audits, setting internal performance indicators and planning improvements to provision. These are reproduced in Appendix 1, having been revised following consultation on their applicability to young people.

Adapting the framework for use with young people involves identifying how their needs differ from those of older students. While respondents recognised that much of the framework is directly transferable, they emphasised the need when dealing with young people to focus more effort on:

- **personal growth.** For a young person, going to college is part of growing up. Is there a range of enrichment activities; encouragement to take greater responsibility; opportunity to become more adult? The initial choice of study area can often be made for a wide variety of reasons not connected with education. Does the institution help students to change courses if they have made the wrong choice? Can students defer final course choice until they have a better understanding of what their real interests and aptitudes are? Is the college reducing parochialism by opening up job markets regionally, nationally, across Europe?
- **social support.** An important aspect of attending college is developing new contacts, new friends, learning to belong to a new institution. To what extent is this aspect of a student's experience of college life considered and reflected in planning? Are student common rooms, canteens and sports facilities comfortable, clean and suitable? Are these facilities kept clean, safe and vandal free during the periods when they are open?
- **work experience.** Experience of the workplace looms large for young people. To what extent is there a college-wide approach to securing work experience placements and helping young people find paid part-time work? Do timetables help juggling work and study? Are students getting a reasonable level of exposure to practical skills, to real situations and pressures?
- **pastoral care.** The transition from school to college is a major move for many young people. In the process of encouraging self-discipline, there is often a need for regular monitoring of student attendance, progress and assignment completion. Are there well-understood rules and procedures and a college-wide consistency in interpreting such rules and procedures?
- **careers advice and guidance.** While many students benefit from sound and impartial careers advice, this area is even more vital for young people attempting to negotiate their first steps into the labour market or to HE. Does this area receive the high profile necessary? Is destination data readily available on the pathways and successes of previous cohorts of FE students?
- **access issues.** Many young people have extremely limited access to money and other social support. If there is any crisis in the home, they are particularly vulnerable. Is help available for those in need of accommodation or financial advice? Can they afford meals while at the college? Are transport services adequate and affordable? Are systems in place which accredit smaller chunks of learning so that if a student drops out and then wants to restart later, they do not have to start at the beginning? Can students use the college facilities for private study in the evenings, on weekends, over holidays?

- **third party responsibilities.** With young people, parents and employers expect regular feedback and monitoring. Are these expectations being met? When drawing from culturally diverse populations is there evidence of respect for that culture — language signs, women's only rooms for Muslim girls, appropriate food in the canteen, an awareness of the main religious days?
- **continuity of experience.** The move from school to college can be made easier if young people are familiar with the college and know what to expect. Are there good links between the feeder schools and the college? Do these begin in the early years of secondary schooling? Do staff in schools understand life in the college? When during secondary schooling are students exposed to FE as an option? Coming straight from school and generally without family responsibilities, young students expect, and can often handle, a steady stream of pressure. Are the expectations of students high enough? Are they progressing as rapidly and as far as they might?
- **information technology and other resources.** Young people are often more computer literate and, with more recent experience of education, less tolerant of poor facilities. Yet they often lack the self-discipline to respond effectively to open learning or resource-based learning initiatives. Are these kinds of facilities readily available to young students? Are strategies in place to encourage a mature use of resource-based learning centres and to monitor student success?
- **building a knowledge-base.** Older students bring to learning a range of general knowledge and life experiences. Young people have not had those opportunities and need to be exposed to a far greater amount of 'taken for granted' knowledge. Do courses adequately ensure that students have the chance to build up this knowledge?

A range of other issues were raised which reflect the difference between part-time students and full-time students rather than on the difference between young people and adults. These included the availability of fast-track options; the availability of sufficient private study spaces; and private space for students to meet tutors, particularly part-time tutors.

The framework as a whole can be used as a planning tool at institutional, local, regional and national levels. Clearly, however, the importance of different elements of the framework will vary, depending on the nature of the planning remit exercised by different parts of the FE sector.

Section 4: Next steps

4.1 LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

Many of the current concerns about the effect of competition may be only the initial teething troubles of a sector learning to adapt to massive and rapid change and having to seek new ways of strategic planning. Nevertheless, there appears to be a number of further steps needed to ensure the smooth operation of the FE market and to monitor the overall adequacy and sufficiency of provision.

In the perfect market, the consumer has perfect information to make a choice and the producers are too numerous to collude in price-fixing, or other activities, which would significantly reduce the responsiveness of the market. In FE, this kind of market does not exist. The institutions must meet the needs of different stakeholders. Potential and actual, students are rarely perfectly informed and price signals, in spite of charters and youth credits are weak. In many situations, the producers dominate the market, and the structural rigidities associated with permanent staff and the long lead times to develop properly equipped accommodation, inhibit rapid responses. Many college managers, while not wishing to lose their new autonomy, express serious reservations about the capacity of the market to deliver an adequate service and argue strongly for more strategic planning at regional and national levels.

4.2 RECENT INITIATIVES

A number of recent developments seem likely to offer improved protection for the consumer and smaller producers, and means of externally monitoring the overall operations of the market.

IMPARTIAL CAREERS GUIDANCE

The new independence of the careers service from the providers, together with proposed legislation giving them (rather than schools) the responsibility for providing school leavers with information on post-16 options is an attempt to ensure that the consumer — the potential student and their parents — has the most objective information available. Work needs to be undertaken to monitor that schools and colleges are not hanging onto students and that cross-referral mechanisms are in place and are used. It will be important also that the careers services are independent and seen to be so. Thought will need to be given to establishing local producer watchdog groups or other forums through which educational institutions can raise queries or voice concerns.

EXPLICIT INSPECTION CRITERIA

The inspection systems of OFSTED and the Funding Councils and the TECs' quality assurance procedures are an attempt to guarantee the quality of the product and processes. The differing demands for data can place a substantial administrative burden on colleges. *Competitiveness: Forging Ahead* (HMSO, 1995) proposes improved links between them. However, there are concerns over how far the same rules are being applied to all institutions providing education and training to the 16-18 age group and the uncertain responsibilities concerning coverage of the private and voluntary sectors.

REGIONAL MONITORING OF PROVISION

The FEFC/TEC regional and sub-regional groupings are a possible mechanism for addressing regional concerns about adequate and sufficient facilities. However, their size is of concern to colleges who have to respond to employers with very local, short-term horizons. Colleges have also noted that different criteria have been set across the country for bids from the competitiveness fund. This mirrors a frequent complaint that local TECs interpret their remit very differently. College principals have expressed concern that TECs with responsibility for youth credits are determining the adequacy of part-time education and training for young people, rather than the FE sector. However, advice on the complex arrangements for *Youth Credits and FEFC Funding* (ED, DFE, TEC National Council, FEFC(E), 1995) is based on the assumption that 'TECs, colleges and careers services are already discussing at the local level their strategic view of the needs of the labour market and the individual young people within it; and identifying in broad terms the range and nature of provision likely to be required'.

Colleges are also concerned that different local authority policies on discretionary and transport awards severely impede their ability to provide equitable and adequate opportunities. It sometimes appears that different statutory authorities and government departments have conflicting priorities which institutions are powerless to affect.

EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Moves toward average levels of funding for FE and the checks and balances of the funding methodologies are seen to create fairer development opportunities for institutions. However, the differential funding of FE 16-19 provision and school sixth forms, and the differential support for further and higher education students are now frequently cited as a serious obstacle to the FE sector properly fulfilling its remit.

The government has announced its intention to investigate whether there is a case for encouraging a more consistent approach to funding methodologies across the sectors (e.g. a measure of output related funding) and to funding levels for similar qualifications in different sectors. Other measures announced

in *Forging Ahead* (HMSO, 1995) and designed to facilitate competition and make colleges and schools more responsive to the demands of young people, include:

- considering relaxing detailed central government controls over the opening and closing of sixth forms
- further consideration of the case for introducing capital charging for schools and for removing borrowing restrictions on grant-maintained schools, to put them on the same financial basis as FE colleges
- legislation to remove the requirement that potential new FE providers must gain the sponsorship of an existing college before receiving FEFC funding
- consulting further on learning credits
- reviewing 16-19 qualifications to ensure relevance, progression, coherence and breadth (the Dearing Review)

These measures are likely to have a significant effect on the way colleges position themselves in the market and how far they are prepared to co-operate with neighbouring institutions. At the same time, the formation of the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) promises more coherence in the roles and responsibilities of TECS, Funding Councils and curriculum bodies.

4.3 CONCLUSIONS

Respondents identified the following broad areas as central to the development of the FE market and to the delivery of an adequate and sufficient FE service:

- improved information on the requirements of the labour market and HE and of the perceived needs of current, and potential students
- greater recognition of the diverse clients to which FE needs to be responsive
- enhancement of strategic planning skills and systems at institutional, local and regional levels
- encouragement of collaborative local/regional planning, where practical building on existing structures, and a clarification of the planning roles of TECs, LEAs, the Funding Councils and other key players
- continued attention to ensuring that impartial and effective career guidance and information is available to all young people, and their parents, at appropriate times throughout their secondary and further education

- common quality standards across all providers of 16-19 education and training
- incorporation of a youth perspective into the inspection framework of the FEFC(E), possibly as an *aide-mémoire*
- continuing documentation, dissemination and evaluation of the effectiveness of approaches to securing adequacy and sufficiency
- dedicated FEFC funds to maintain accessibility of specialist provision on a national basis, including a pool to address curriculum areas in danger of disappearing
- increased resources for accommodation and for student income support

Despite current concerns, this report demonstrates that a number of informal and formal strategies are developing, tailored to local circumstances. The new regional and sub-regional groups and other informal forums may find it useful to:

- analyse responsibilities of different parties for securing adequate and sufficient provision
- consult other stakeholders who have an interest in FE but no statutory duties
- use the framework checklist to identify the relevant contributions of different organisations, instances of duplication of effort and gaps where further development is needed
- identify projects where partnerships can maximise benefits to providers without damaging their market position
- evaluate the effect of national policies for funding institutions and individuals on local provision
- plan a strategy to collect and disseminate publicly available data tailored to the needs of different parties in order to maximise efficient sharing and usage of information
- undertake local studies, for example of enrolment and progression patterns, travel routes, employers' perceived needs and actual recruitment and training

In this way, it may be possible to establish mutually beneficial collaboration in a competitive environment.

Appendix 1 Checklists for securing adequate and sufficient provision

Changes to the framework for adult learners are in bold; there have also been a few deletions.

VOLUME

needs identification

- links to youth services
- **survey of parental expectations**
- systematic processes attuned to the youth market
- community consultation mechanisms
- outreach liaison strategies
- community profiling
- inter-agency networking and consultation
- feedback from guidance services
- central logging of enquiries from would-be learners, their parents or teachers
- surveys of existing students

amount of provision

- availability of choice of pathways and mode of delivery
- systematic and comprehensive information on other provision in the locale
- a coherent offer across providers, and thus complementary provision
- data on recent trends in provision and uptake
- external steers
- prioritisation in the light of available funding

curriculum breadth

- a flexible curriculum which allows deferment of choice and easy transfer
- provision of curriculum enrichment opportunities
- systematic approach to broadening opportunities at regional, national and European levels
- a balanced curriculum in the locale to include practical, physical and intellectual programmes
- policy priorities, leading to a targeted curriculum offer

curriculum range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — clear continuity from school curriculum — availability of structured learning programmes across a number of levels — clear articulation of learning outcomes — differentiated curricula to suit both individuals and groups of learners
accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — access to recognised, transportable, accreditation — suitability of assessment processes sufficiently sensitive not to act as a barrier to successful participation/accreditation

ACCESSIBILITY

information/guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — availability of impartial advice and guidance to would-be young learners, parents and school staff — multi-agency involvement in service delivery — expert information on benefit and welfare rights — outreach guidance
location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — within easy reach of public transport — having provision in convenient locations — outreach centres and community-based learning sites and resources
timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — at times consistent with local availability of part-time employment — provision scheduled to take place at times convenient to young people — a balance of day-time and evening, full- and part-time provision — programmes available at weekends, and outside the 'normal' teaching year
fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — clearly defined criteria for reduced fees and assistance with transport, meals, and books — targeted concessions/remissions allow for cross-subsidy

flexibility

- open learning facilities and resources, including IT support
- generic staff support
- individualised learning programmes and the promotion of student self-study
- curriculum modularisation

progression

- **opportunities for work experience**
- clear definition of progression opportunities, in and between providing agencies
- multi-agency mapping of available opportunities
- availability of up-to-date information on progression options
- opportunity for credit accumulation and transfer

QUALITY

learning and teaching

- formal induction of all tutors
- staff manuals
- routine class observation and appraisal
- surveys of student views, and suggestion schemes
- peer review
- formal inspection of provision

ethos

- **accommodation, canteens, recreation and practical facilities suited to the needs of young people**
- sensitivity to diverse cultures of student body
- encouraging a sense of belonging and attentive to social needs of young people
- involvement of users in decision making

staff competence

- **availability of return to industry opportunities to maintain currency of staff skills**
- a focus on core skills across the curriculum
- regular exchanges with feeder schools
- selection criteria
- staff development opportunities
- formal training programmes designed to familiarise staff with youth-sensitive teaching skills and approaches

teaching/learning resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — access to information technology for course work and private study — availability of resources and equipment — accessibility of resource centres, libraries and workshops — availability of areas for individual study
accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — provision of safe, clean and vandal-proof environment — recreation facilities for full-time students — appropriate levels of heating and lighting — car parking facilities
quality assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — feedback to parents, employers and feeder schools — systematic surveying of opinions of parents, employers, feeder schools and other key stakeholders — formalised procedures for course programme review — systematic surveying of student opinion — formal evaluation systems — functional course/programme teams — administrative infrastructure — preparation of quality standards

EQUITY

participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — a range of approaches for recruiting and retaining disaffected youths — comprehensive monitoring of the student body and comparison with demographic profile of the area served — data gathered from enrolment forms — regular production of participation profiles, leading to action planning
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learner support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— financial and accommodation advice— part-time employment advice— tutorial and pastoral care system— attendance monitoring and drop-out follow-up system— availability of institution-wide support network, including specialist services for language, literacy and numeracy support, and support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities— student advice and counselling— study skills support— crèche facilities— transport schemes
targeting strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— use of appropriate messages and media in marketing provision— monitoring of achievement of targeted groups— specific curricula targeted at particular groups— funding mechanisms which promote targeting of specific client groups— short-term projects, and 'mainstreaming' successfully piloted projects
achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— evidence of success for different groups— value-added analysis— monitoring achievements of graduates— systematic ongoing monitoring of student achievements— monitoring achievement, including formal qualification rate— recording learner achievement

Appendix 2 Further and Higher Education Act 1992 – extract

THE NEW FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR

FULL-TIME EDUCATION FOR 16 TO 18 YEAR OLDS

2. (1) It shall be the duty of each council to secure the provision for the population of their area of sufficient facilities for education to which this subsection applies, that is, full-time education suitable to the requirements of persons over compulsory school age who have not attained the age of nineteen years.
 - (2) That duty extends to all persons among that population who may want such education and have not attained the age of nineteen years.
 - (3) A council shall discharge the duty so as —
 - (a) to secure that facilities are provided at such places, are of such character and are so equipped as to be sufficient to meet the reasonable needs of all persons to whom the duty extends, and
 - (b) to take account of the different abilities and aptitudes of such persons.
 - (4) A council may secure the provision of facilities for education to which sub-section (1) applies for persons to whom that duty does not extend.
 - (5) A council shall discharge their functions under this section so as to make the most effective use of the council's resources and, in particular, to avoid provision which might give rise to disproportionate expenditure.

Appendix 3 Contributors and workshop participants

INTERVIEWS AND WORKSHOP

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WORKSHOP ONLY

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